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VII.—*A short Memoir of the Proceedings of the Honourable Company's Surveying Brig "Palinurus," during her late Examination of the Coast between Ras Morbat and Ras Seger, and between Ras Fartak and the Ruins of Mesinah.* By J. P. SAUNDERS, Commander.

HAVING obtained permission from the Government, I proceeded from Bombay to Muscat, where I obtained a rate for the chronometers; I left that place on the 17th, and arrived at Morbat on the 24th December, in company with the tender "Nurbudda." We experienced a strong belaât wind in passing through Curia Muria Bay.

In obedience to my instructions, I commenced a trigonometrical survey at Morbat, surveying $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles to the eastward of that place, and the bay, on a large scale; I then proceeded to the westward, in continuation of the survey on a scale of 2040 yards to half an inch.

I have minutely examined the coast and bays between Ras Morbat and Ras Seger, and between Ras Fartak and Mesinah, making a total distance of near 180 miles, well sounded; the whole distance is perfectly clear of any shoals which would interfere with ship navigation, with the exception of one near Ras Deriah.

I was much hindered on my first arrival on the coast by the strong Belaât winds which prevail on it, one breeze succeeding another at intervals of eight or ten days, always blowing very strong, sometimes a perfect gale, and constantly varying in gusts from N.N.E. to N.N.W., rendering it quite unsafe to send a boat away from the vessel. These belaâts never last less than three, but sometimes seven, or even ten days.

The belaât is also dangerous to ships near the shore. Occasionally at night the breeze would die away to a perfect calm, and remain so for an hour or two; heavy gusts would then blow down from the mountains at intervals of a few minutes (without any warning except the noise on the water), sufficiently strong to split the sails or carry away the masts of any ship under sail not prepared for it: these gusts would succeed each other for five or six hours.

In one of these belaâts the tender's main-mast was carried away; she however reached the "Palinurus," and, as at that time her services were much required, I jury-rigged and kept her with me. The belaâts were succeeded often by strong southeasterly winds, which, bringing with them a very considerable swell, were almost as great a hindrance as that wind.

At Morbat we received much kindness from the Bedouin Sheikh Bokhert bin Mohammed, who allowed me to measure a base

on shore, and carry on surveying operations, without a single objection. An Arab, named Alli bin Mohammed, who produced good certificates from Captain Haines, I.N., made himself extremely useful to the vessel during her stay.

Morbat Bay affords good shelter from the N.E., but I doubt much if a ship could ride with security in the S.W. monsoon; the natives state, however, that the swell is not very great, and that a buggalow rode the monsoon out by hauling up close to the town. The town of Morbat consists of about 30 or 40 mud and stone houses, with a population of about 150 men, women, and children. Indifferent bullocks and brackish water may be obtained.

Morbat Peak, bearing about true north from the town, is the western brow of a noble limestone range of mountains stretching to the eastward, nearly as far as Ras Nús, a distance of 40 miles, varying in height from 3600 to 5000 feet; between the mountains and the sea is a low plain: their greatest distance from the sea is about 12 miles, at Morbat about 5. The mountains are well peopled, covered with trees and long grass, which affords pasturage to numerous droves of bullocks, sheep, and goats, which I saw on the hills.

From Morbat Peak, the highest range of the mountains curve in to the N. by W., sloping from their brows down towards the plain of Dhafar, the commencement of which is about 20 miles to the westward of Morbat: round it the lower extremities of the mountains rise rather abruptly to about 600 feet; from thence the high range appeared to me to be connected with the high mountains of Ras Seger.

Nearly the whole distance between Morbat and Dhafar the line of coast is clifty, very barren, and uninhabited; one of the ridges from the mountains approaches within a mile of the sea.

At Thagah, and to the westward of it, the coast is low and sandy as far as Diríz; the hills suddenly turn to the northward, and in a semicircular form surround the plain of Dhafar, the greatest distance from the sea being about 14 miles.

The water had been deep close to the shore so far as Thagah but as we advanced along the coast towards the centre of the plain of Dhafar, a bank of soundings suddenly stretched off from it to the distance of 12 and 15 miles, again gradually closing with the coast as we approached the high mountains of Seger.

From the cocoa-nut trees near El Balad the coast bends a little to the southward towards Bander Risút, which is a small yba about one mile in depth, and somewhat more in width, with 3 fathoms, sandy bottom, a considerable distance inside the cape; it affords good shelter in the S.W. monsoon. The inhabitants of the towns of Abkud and Okud pitch tents and live here during

that season, to avoid the heat of the plain, and to catch fish, which then abound here.

From Ras Risút towards Ras-el-Ahmar, and thence to Ras Seger, the water near the shore deepened very much, obliging the vessel to anchor in 28 to 33 fathoms water; the bank still however extended several miles to sea, causing the boat-work to be very laborious.

The coast between Risút and Ras-el-Ahmar is dark, rugged, and barren, the cliffs rising out of the sea, and having 9 and 10 fathoms nearly touching them. Ras-el-Ahmar is a dark bluff cape, about 700 feet high, rising almost perpendicularly out of the sea; it is merely a narrow ridge, scarcely affording footing in some places along the summit: it is composed of limestone, and has a remarkable peak on the very outer extremity of it, by which it may be known.

Ras Seger (Sejer) is a bold cape, about 3000 feet high at 2 miles from sea: it projects but little from the line of coast to the eastward, and has 90 fathoms no bottom at 1 mile distance. This cape forms the boundary between the territory of the tribes Beni Gharrah and Beni Mahrah. The coast between it and Ras-el-Ahmar forms a bay, and is irregular and broken, with two or three sandy patches between the hills and cliffs, which rise directly out of the sea.

Some parts of the land near Ras Seger are covered with trees and jungle, but generally speaking the coast is perfectly barren, with a most desolate and forbidding appearance. From Ras Seger the coast runs into Gúbut Ghummar,* which in consequence of the winds and currents I could not at the time survey.

The first village I came to in the plain of Dhafar was Thagah, and the sight of it was refreshing to us: two groves of cocoa-nut trees, and (for the place) a considerable cultivation of dhurra round it, gave to the little town a very pleasant appearance. We anchored in the evening late, and the next forenoon the Sheikh, Sayyad Alí bin Abdullah bah Omar, sent off a very civil message to me, accompanied by a present of a bullock, some water, and a few cocoa-nuts. A ship could procure a small supply of water and some bullocks here.

The town is built of mud and stones, and contains about 350 inhabitants of all kinds; it appears to be left in peace and quietness by the Bedouins (a rare thing in Dhafar): this is in consequence of the Sheikh being a Sayyad; for even the wildest of Bedouins, who possibly cannot say a prayer, will respect a Sayyad, and his property, from some vague idea that he is connected with the prophet they profess to worship.

* Bay of the Moon.

The Sheikh was very civil, and, in course of conversation with the surgeon of the vessel, offered to take any officer into Hadramaut, which he described as a journey of 15 days: this he proposed to do by going a part of the distance himself, and passing the person from Sayyad to Sayyad. He also described Hadramaut as a large cultivated district, with numerous small independent towns, constantly disturbed by petty jealousies, and at war with each other.

There are at Thagah two fresh-water khors and one (Khor Ririe) salt, which runs from the hills (apparently) and discharges itself into the sea; the upper part may be fresh, but near the sea it is very brackish, and has a perceptible rise and fall: it is separated from the sea by a ridge of sand, and the natives have a tradition that formerly boats could anchor in it. On the sea face of the khor there is an opening in the limestone cliffs (here about 100 feet high) that form the line of the coast, which has a similar appearance to the openings of the Shermes in the Red Sea, and probably has been caused by the action of the water from the khor.

A very remarkable piece of table-land and a large cavern attracting our attention, Dr. Carter visited it, and thus describes his trip:—"Three miles from Thagah you arrive at the bed of the torrent, which comes from the precipices, and which terminates in Khor Rerie, between the two portions of cliff east of Thagah. I followed the wadi for three-quarters of a mile to the foot of the precipice, and then ascended at the corner of it, over, sometimes, the perpendicular face of the mountains, and throughout a dangerous ascent for one not accustomed to that sort of climbing. I arrived at the top of the plateau, which is bounded by mountains on three sides, and the fourth is the edge of the precipice, which looks towards the sea. The sides of the mountains are covered with a thick coppice of gum-trees and other shrubs; the plateau itself quite green and covered with the remains of different kinds of fruit-trees and useful shrubs, having the appearance of once having been a large garden; little streams, which were supplied by a reservoir of water behind, traversed it in all directions, affording a plentiful supply of moisture to the different plots of dhurra, lucerne, and vegetables that were growing there. I went to the cave, which belonged to the Bedouins who conducted me to the plateau; found it of ample dimensions, and was received most welcome by the Bedouin's wife. The Sheikh of Thagah's wife was also there in another recess of the cavern, but did not show herself, being an Arab, yet she freely conversed with us. I remained with them the best part of the day; they wanted me to stay the night, offered to kill a sheep for me, and gave me milk as well as some of

their medicines, with an account of their virtues. I saw many sick people from the neighbouring caves who were brought to me. The Bedouí's wife was tall, very handsome, of the gipsy expression and feature; wore her hair in two large plaited tresses, one hanging down on each side of the front of her neck; her dress, a long gown, tight round the lower part of the neck, extending to between the knee and foot in front, and trailing on the ground behind, with large sleeves. Her skin not much darker than that of the gipsy of England. The cavern roof was studded with stalactites, some of which were two yards long. Towards eve, descended to the plateau, and went to the most inland side of it: found it bounded by a canal about 40 yards broad and very deep, but I had no means of ascertaining its depth; it was full a mile long, and appeared to be fed by a stream from the mountain. After this I examined the trees and plants in the neighbourhood, descended from the plateau, and returned to Thagah."

The plateau was of a quadrilateral shape, three-quarters of a mile broad facing the sea, and a mile deep.

The cavern was on the right-hand side of the plateau, on the slope of the mountain, and about 100 feet above it (its base?); the span of the arch was 130 feet; the depth of the cavern 30 yards: it would hold 100 head of cattle besides the people.

Many caves similar to this are found in these mountains, and are considered a great blessing by the natives. They are suited to all the variations of climate which they experience; for they say, When it is too hot outside we can enter inside, and when too cold we can light a fire without fear of having our house burnt down, and our cattle is kept in security. During the S.W. monsoon on that coast, when it is very hot in the plains, these caves make a delicious retreat.

Diríz is a small town with considerable cultivation round it,—jowarí, dokhun, cotton, &c.,—the whole guarded by many watch-towers scattered round the town and within shot of each other, which shows the insecurity of the country. It is governed by Oman bin Ahmed Muzzoof, very old and nearly blind; he is the descendant of the former governors of Dhafar, who succeeded to the government on the departure of the Min Goe family.

From Diríz to the westward fresh-water khors and wells are numerous, and the country well cultivated in patches. Long groves of date and cocoa-nut trees growing near the shore, with a fine healthful green look, mixed with the brighter green of the fields of grain, quite changed the appearance of the coast, and seemed most delightful to us, accustomed to the dreary, barren shore we had been surveying.

At my request Dr. Carter visited and examined the ruins of El Balad, and I herewith send in his full and interesting ac-

count of them for the information of Government. The other villages in Dhafar besides Thagah and Diriz are as under:—El Haffer: Sheikh, Salam bin Saad; containing about 600 inhabitants, with eight fishing-boats, surrounded by cocoa-nut trees; some dhurra, mysably, and dokhun cultivated, and several wells of good water.

Robat. Deserted; the houses still in tolerable repair, with a good mosque; wall built of stone, and bearing an inscription on the pulpit with the date of its erection, 1232 of the Hejira; built by Abdul Sheikh bin Tanjah.

Sallalah—Sheikh, Saad bin Mohammed—contains about 600 inhabitants, has one buggalow belonging to it, and is cultivated in a similar way to El Haffer; it has a fresh-water khor and several good wells.

Abkud is a small village with about 80 inhabitants, a khor of fresh water, a little cultivation, and 10 fishing-boats.

Okud, another small village, containing about 120 inhabitants, has some cultivation, several wells of good water, and three boats; it has a salt khor near it.

The whole of these are irregularly built of stone and mud, Sallalah excepted, which exhibits considerable care for appearances, and in one part the houses are built of equal height round three sides of a square facing the hills, and which, strange to say, is kept clean and in good order.

The district of Dhafar extends along the sea-coast from Bander Risut to Morbat, and is bounded by hills on the land side; it is, with the exception of the cultivation near the towns on the sea-coast, quite barren and uninhabited. One large Arab ruin on a mound, in appearance like a fort (which the Arabs would not take us to), and one or two small towers built to protect cultivation, are the only buildings on it. When the celebrated pirate, Sayyad Mohammed Akil, took possession of Dhafar, after nearly two years' fighting with the Bedouins, he made it his first business to improve the country and bring the Bedouins into good order, which, by dint of his ill-acquired money, he succeeded for 20 years in doing to a great degree: he kept a standing force of 50 seedies and 2000 other men, by whom he kept the Bedouins in check, improved and repaired Sallalah and the other towns, and encouraged trade. He had one square-rigged vessel and a buggalow of his own, with which he traded during the fine season. Any improper act of the Bedouins done in the plain was severely punished by him.

He carried his severity at last too far, for, having put to death some Bedouins for plundering in the towns, the brother of one of them swore to have "blood for blood," patiently waited his opportunity for many months, and at last assassinated the pirate

Sheikh as he was going to the mosque to prayers in the midst of his slaves: the Bedouin was cut to pieces almost in the act, but his family were revenged, for their enemy died. This happened about 19 years ago.

From this time all was anarchy and confusion; each of the little towns set up a Sheikh independent of the others; trade fell off; the Bedouins again became powerful, and annoyed the people of the plain so much that they were obliged to desert Robat, a new town situated but very little farther inland than the others; discord and ill-feeling arose between the inhabitants of the towns; and, ridiculous as it appeared to us when we were there, the people of any one village were afraid to go to another, probably half a mile from it, though I could never learn that their belligerent propensities ever extended beyond the use of their tongues.

The inhabitants of Dhafar are a weak, indolent race, terrified to the last degree at the Beni Gharrah, who, taking advantage of their timidity, oppress them very much, and hesitate not, when opposition is dared to be shown, to use sword or jambier to enforce their demands, as the bodies of very many of the townspeople, which we saw, testified, some of whose wounds were scarcely cicatrised. The Dhafar people all appeared impressed with the idea that the English government were going to take possession of that province, and most anxious to know when it would be done. They are tired of their present state, but have no means of helping themselves.

The trade at present carried on in the province of Dhafar is small. The inhabitants procure myrrh and frankincense from the Beni Gharrah during the S.W. monsoon, which in the fine season is bartered to the trading boats, principally for rice, blue cotton dungarí, dates, and jowarí; but their wants are so few that very little supplies them; the fish which they catch and the little grain they grow being nearly sufficient.

Morbat is the principal trading town. They export and import the same description of articles as the other towns, the Sheikh levying a general duty of 10 per cent. on all exports, and 5 per cent. upon all imports. The weight used by them in buying and selling is a maund, equal to the weight of 48 German crowns; the trade is principally carried on by barter.

The Sheikh of Morbat is brother to the head of what was formerly a powerful subdivision of the Beni Gharrah; his brother Ali lives in the mountains. They are still looked upon as the head of the tribe, and retain several of the privileges by sufferance which their forefathers could keep by their own power. He had always been very civil to the surveying vessels, and I made him a present for his assistance. At El Haffer I filled up

the water of both vessels, which enabled me to remain on the coast much longer than I could otherwise have done. At this place a vessel can procure good water from the people at the rate of 120 gallons for a German crown. It would be very laborious and perhaps dangerous for crews of ships' boats to fill up their own casks, in consequence of the surf; but the natives will bring out the water in their own fishing-boats. If breakers or skins are taken, a supply of from 800 to 1000 gallons a-day may be obtained if sufficient casks are sent at once, for they are lazy, and will not, without some bother, fill a second boat after once leaving off.

The water is procured from the khor round the ruins of El Balad, which may be known by the high mound formed by the ruins of the castle situated at the east end of the long grove of cocoa-nut trees.

I think Bander Risút will be available merely as a place of shelter; for the Bedouins of the Beni Gharrah tribe in the vicinity are men of bad character, who hesitate not to commit any crime. A surveying party, consisting of Lieutenant Fell, Dr. Carter, Mr. Midshipman James, and some seamen, were attacked whilst returning to the vessel from taking observations on Ras-el-Ahmar, and fired upon, by some of these, whilst under the protection of one of the tribe, who had hired himself as protector and guide. Breach of faith I have never before met with. The officers prudently did not wound nor kill any of them, and the Bedouins retired as they approached the vessel. There is a well of indifferent water half a mile distant from the beach.

As early as the 9th of February the winds set in from the southward, and with the southerly winds an easterly current from Ras Seger to Ras Risút: the work was very heavy to both officers and boats' crews.

As we approached Ras Seger the currents became stronger, running constantly from half a knot to 2 knots per hour to the eastward, with light S.S.W. winds lasting for a few hours during the day, and then succeeded by calms which lasted the remainder of the twenty-four hours, detaining the vessels at their station, and sometimes when I endeavoured to move them they lost ground. I finished up to Ras Seger by the boats only.

My own knowledge and the information I gained from the natives and the pilot of the vessel leading me to believe the currents were not so strong to the W.S.W. of Ras Fartak, I determined on going there, and after struggling with the currents off shore for six days I reached it. Some boats which passed the vessel two days before she started, and went round Gúbut Ghummar close to the shore, did not reach Fartak for two or three days after her, proving that the currents were equally strong or stronger

in the bay than we had them off Ras Seger. Off Ras Fartak I found, as I expected, much less current and more favourable winds.

The Arabs on this part of the Arabian coast consider that the N.E. monsoon lasts only three months to the N.E. of Ras Fartak, viz. part of November, December, January, and part of February. The S.W. monsoon is considered over at the middle or end of August, and they begin to trade at the beginning of September. Between the 1st of September and the setting in of the N.E. monsoon is about six weeks, and is a season of light, variable winds called Damauro.

In March the southerly winds to the E.N.E. of Ras Fartak blow sometimes very fresh, particularly in Curia Muria Bay. April and May is considered another season, which is called Bayn el Autem by the Arab navigators. The winds are variable, though generally inclining to the S. Vessels pass up and down, and, as the current sets up to the E., they make rapid passages to Mascat and the Persian Gulf. Nearly all the trading boats which pass down in the commencement of the N.E. monsoon return again in these months, bringing back rafters, grain, and slaves from the different ports to which they have been.

Ras Fartak, supposed to be the Ras Siagros of the ancients, from its resemblance, when bearing E. or W., to the head of a boar, is a lofty headland of about 2500 feet elevation, forming a very prominent cape, which may be seen by navigators 60 miles off in clear weather. The point of the cape is the southern extremity of Gúbut-al-Ghummar, and stretches away to the northward for some miles; it also forms the western side of that bay.

The coast from Ras Fartak runs in a S.W. by W. direction to Ras Dariah (Derkah?), nearly straight, low and sandy. Sand-hills rise gradually towards the interior. The whole is barren, with the exception of a few stunted bushes and small patches of cultivation near the villages.

Ras Dariah projects to the southward about $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles from the line of coast between it and Ras Fartak, and forms the southern extremity of the eastern side of the bay of Keshín. It is formed of perpendicular cliffs, varying from 200 to 400 feet in height. It is, like Ras Fartak, bold and safe to approach, having 9 fathoms within a stone's throw of its base. It is perfectly barren.

The bay of Keshín is immediately on the western side of Ras Dariah, running to the W. by S. as far as the town of Keshín, where it takes rather an abrupt turn to the southward towards Ras Sharwein, the eastern extremity of which forms the southern entrance of the bay.

The western side of the bay of Keshín affords good shelter in the S.W. monsoon, which blows directly off from the high land

of Ras Sharwein. I anchored the "Palinurus" under the cape in $7\frac{1}{2}$ fathoms, sandy bottom, a mile from the weather shore, with the extreme of the low bluff of the cape bearing true S. 20° E.; minaret in Keshín town, N. 17° E.; Sharwein Peak, W. $24^{\circ} 13'$ S.; and the Asses' Ears, W. $19^{\circ} 49'$ S.

I had left a long, high southerly swell outside, but in the bay found quite smooth water, the wind blowing in strong puffs from the land; a low, long swell occasionally rolled round the cape across the wind, but the shore under the Sharwein Peak had not a ripple on it.

The best anchorage, however, is nearer the shore, in $5\frac{1}{2}$ fathoms, shutting in the second and third bluffs. A vessel then loses all the swell, and will anchor in perfectly quiet water, at a long one-third of a mile from the shore. A vessel may anchor still nearer, if she likes, in safety during the S.W. monsoon, for no change of wind takes place during that season, and the buggalows belonging to the tribe remain during it made fast to the shore in security. It would be better to moor. The way to and from Bunder Lusk is open and safe.

The high peak of Ras Sharwein is about 750 feet high; from the peak, which is about 2 miles from the sea, the land gradually slopes to the W. like a gunner's quoin, and terminates in cliffs varying from 80 to 150 feet in height, against the base of which the monsoon swell lashes with great fury. One or two small sandy patches show themselves on the sea front, else all is dark, black, and perpendicular, with deep water close to it. About half a mile to the W. is a hill with two very remarkable sugar-loaf peaks close together, and called by Horsburgh "Asses' Ears."

From Ras Sharwein to Ras Hattab, near 15 miles to the S.W. by S., the coast is sandy, gradually ascending from the beach; in some parts it is blown up high against the sides of the hills: one remarkable black rock only rears itself through the sand; the whole distance of the coast is safe to approach.

From Ras Hattab to Ras Aghrib the coast continues in nearly the same general line of bearing, but becomes broken; several rocky capes project from the sandy beach and form small bays between them, some of which afford shelter in the N.E. monsoon to small boats and buggalows; a few miserable fishermen live in different spots along the coast. The coast is bold and safe to approach; from Ras Sharwein to Ras Aghrib, however, the water becomes less deep near the shore.

From Ras Aghrib to Mesinah the coast is again low, straight, and sandy, with regular soundings off it, and may be closely approached. It has little or nothing worthy of notice on the shore, except the town of Sihút and one or two patches of date-trees.

Magnificent ranges of mountains, varying in height from 3000 to 4000 feet, run along this part of the coast, at a distance of from 10 to 13 miles from the sea. A few miles to the W. of Sihút the Wadi Masilah breaks the ranges of these mountains. The width of this valley between the brows of the mountains is 6 miles: through it is the road to Hadramaut from all the Mahrah towns. It is represented to be well cultivated, with large and numerous date-groves and plenty of water in it; a village is situated in a grove of date-trees on the plain at its entrance. The fishermen told me that the people at Sihút and the villagers, though a branch of the Mahrah, had quarrelled, and that the former could not enter the valley. The ruins of two strong forts, one on each side of the entrance of the valley, show that the pass to the interior was at one time thought worthy of being well guarded.

At Mesinah a surveying party landed, after two days' negotiating with the Bedouins. Dr. Carter proceeded to examine the ruin and its vicinity, in the hope of finding the inscription stated by the Rev. Dr. Forster in his work to have been seen on a large stone over the south gate.

The place was visited and examined by the officers under command of Capt. S. B. Haines* during his survey of the coast, but, to prevent any chance of such an inscription being overlooked, Dr. Carter again visited the mound, and spent several hours in examining the ruin and the plain about it.

He merely found a mound about 15 feet high, but no trace of an arched wall or gate was perceptible; it is almost, however, a shapeless mass, but on diligent search Dr. Carter found vestiges of what he conceived to be the original sides of the building, and, tracing them very carefully, he measured them about 36 yards square, having apparently had a tower at each angle; on the side facing the east there were appearances which indicated that steps had at one time led down from the castle.

The walls have been built for some feet up with limestone; some of the stones are 2 and 3 feet long, and cut; the upper part of them is the common black basalt with which the neighbourhood abounds. Dr. Carter took pieces of each kind of stone, also portions of the mortar from between two pieces of the limestone, and compared them with a piece taken from between the latter and the basalt at the line of connection: both were of the same composition, the same hardness, and apparently the same age.

From the size of the castle I should imagine it could never have been used for any other purpose than to receive and protect

* See Capt. Haines' paper, Vol. XV. p. 104.

goods whilst waiting for carriage into the interior; there is no appearance of a town having ever existed near it. A long back-water runs along to the E.N.E. (separated from the sea only by a narrow slip of land) for about a mile, and then branches into the interior a short distance: the depth was trifling, stones in all directions showing their black faces above the water.

Some mangroves are scattered about, particularly to the W.S.W. of it; and many whitened stumps, sticking up through the sandy beach, indicate that the sand has of late years been encroaching to no small extent.

The swamp or back-water has a small opening into the sea, very narrow, but still it connects it. A spring of good fresh water bubbles up under the salt, near the ruin, though I believe it is uncovered at low water.

The water the fishermen and the Bedouins use is some distance from the beach.

Tribe.—The whole of the coast from Ras Fartak to Mesinah belongs to the Mahrah tribe, but that forms only a part of their territory, which extends through Gubut-al-Ghummar to Ras Seger; and they again, it is said, make their appearance in the vicinity of Ras Nús, the two portions of the tribe being divided by the Beni Gharrah; they have the character of being the most united and powerful tribe on the coast.

The head of the tribe is Sultan of Keshin, Omar bin Towarí bin Afrite: this last title his family has borne for many generations, why I could not discover. His influence extends generally over the whole of the Mahrah tribe; but what may be termed his government extends only from the town of Hasweil to Mesinah. In the vicinity of Ras Fartak, the Sheikh of Wadi, Esah bin Mombarrack, is considered as the chief, always professing the greatest respect and obedience to Omar bin Towarí. Beyond Fartak the government and coast is portioned out in a similar way to the chiefs, all however considering the Sultan as their head.

The chiefs of this tribe seemed but ill inclined towards the English. At Ras Fartak, on one occasion, I sent the interpreter on shore to the fishing village of Kesíd, to open a communication with them: the people appeared much frightened, would give him no information, promise him no safety, neither sell him anything for the use of the vessel; but told him to go on board, and then left him by himself. They also told him that the Bedouins would come down to us; and it afterwards appeared that the dread of them induced the fishermen to act as they did.

Not knowing what might be the feelings of the Bedouins towards us should they come down, I started a surveying party

off at break of day to measure a base and take the necessary observations for commencing the survey in this part: this they were allowed to do unmolested; but in the evening, when a party again went, they were warned off, and on looking round they saw the rocks were covered by matchlock-men with matches lighted and guns pointed to the boat.

After a long time the interpreter was allowed to land, and the demand what he wanted, &c., was often repeated; the conference ended at last by the Sheikh of Wadí saying we should neither land nor sound, and if we did we should be fired upon. I merely sent a message to say that, if any of the boats were fired upon, I would sink every Mahrah buggalow I met with; and as the boats were on the point of returning at the end of the season, this had the desired effect; the Sheikh went away and we were not molested.

I sent the interpreter to the Sultan of Keshín, on my arrival there, to demand an explanation and purchase a few articles required for the vessel. The Sultan would neither give an explanation nor allow any person in the town to sell a handful of dates to us; yet his tribe have several buggalows that go to Mangalore and Aden yearly.

Towns.—Of the towns and villages on the western side of Ras Fartak, Kesíd, or, as called by the people in the buggalows, Teif, is a small fishing village situated immediately at the base of the high land on the western side of Ras Fartak. It contains about 32 small houses and 150 men, women, and children. It has no trade; the inhabitants are miserably poor, subject to the depredations of the Bedouins, to whom they can offer no resistance, running away to the hills when they hear of any number of the Bedouins approaching. Off this village is the usual anchorage of the boats trading with the Mahrah tribe situated in the windings of the small valley on the western side of the cape. At $1\frac{1}{2}$ mile from the sea are some small date-groves, and the villages of Dhekrabait on the eastern side, and Kuddiefút on the western side of it; the former village containing about 70 houses and 250 inhabitants, and the latter 90 houses and about 300 men, women, and children. These are well supplied with water from many wells in the neighbourhood, and the inhabitants cultivate in small quantities dhurra dokhun, a hab or ghoom: they have two small khors of salt water near them, from which they make considerable quantities of salt, and export it.

The towns are built of mud and stone, but not walled. A few trading Bedouins live there, but the rest of the inhabitants are Arabs; no Banians are allowed to remain.

Wadí, one of the most powerful towns belonging to the

Mahrah tribe, lies about 3 hours' journey from the landing-place at Kesíd, following the valley at the western foot of the Fartak hills. It has three or four forts or large fortified houses for its protection, capable of being defended, and contains about 600 men, women, and children; of these, 200 are said to be well-armed men, fighting characters, and Bedouins.

Wadí is a place of considerable trade, and its port is Kesíd. The inhabitants own several buggalows, which trade to Mangalore, Mascat, and Zanzibar, touching at other ports on their way. The principal exports are salt, salt fish, and sharks' fins; the imports, rice in small quantities, blue and white linen cloth from India, slaves, tobacco, and wood for building boats and rafters from Zanzibar and the African coast, dates from Mascat and the Gulf. The inhabitants are wealthy for Arabs, and their arms are well decorated with silver; but there, as in general with the Mahrah tribe, they bear a bad character, and are not trusted by the trading Arabs.

It is the largest slave-dealing town on the coast, and a number of slaves are annually imported which are sold to their own and other tribes. It may be recollected they sent two buggalows with slaves to India, which were seized by the government authorities. On hearing that, the Wadí people seized an English buggalow in retaliation; and although they seem to be under the apprehension of being one day punished for so doing, the Sheikh of Wadí, Eisáh bin Mombarrack, in the conversation the interpreter had with him at Ras Fartak, professed to consider the matter settled and at rest. He said, "The Government seized my slaves; I seized a buggalow of equal value, and paid my merchants; that made things right."

Hasweil is the next town to the S.W. by W. of Fartak. It is situated near the beach, built of mud and stone, not walled; it has several houses, about 70 altogether, built for defence, and 450 inhabitants; has several fishing-boats, and is well supplied with water. A little dhurra, &c., is cultivated, but the inhabitants depend a good deal on the fishing-boats for food, and carry on a small trade in them along the coast from village to village, sometimes going a long way from their home. There are a few date-trees in the neighbourhood.

Saghar is a small town similar to Hasweil, only more straggling; contains about 90 houses and 550 inhabitants—is well supplied with water. A considerable quantity of grain is cultivated in the vicinity; but the people are obliged, in common with the other small towns, to keep a sharp watch over it, as the Bedouins in the wantonness of power hesitate not, when it has sprung well above ground, to drive at night their goats and other cattle in the

midst to eat and destroy it. This village has no boats. On some low cliffs to the S.S.W. of it stands a large white Mohammedan tomb.

In Keshín bay, between Ras Derkah and the town, are the villages Haft and Súk; the former having about 20 houses and 150 people, and the latter about 25 houses and 180 people: they cultivate a little grain near the village. Near Súk is a salt-water khor called Khor Súk, and a few date-trees.

Keshín is the residence of Sultan Omar bin Towarí bin Afrite. It is a large straggling town nearly half a mile inland; it has a long sea front, which makes it appear to be much longer than it actually is. It contains about 110 houses and 600 inhabitants.

The sultan and his family, as well as the other inhabitants, are poor, and carry on a small trade with the Gulf, Zanzibar, and the Malabar coast. They export to Zanzibar salt and dried fish; to the Malabar coast they send money principally; and receive in return from those places jowarí, rice, cotton, cloth, dates, sugar, and coffee. Two Banians are allowed to reside in Keshín. Between the town and the sea some little grain is cultivated, but not nearly sufficient for the uses of the inhabitants; the deficiency is supplied from Zanzibar. Keshín is one of the Mahrah ports, in which their boats are laid up for the S.W. monsoon, and I found twelve buggalows of from 30 to 100 tons securely moored in Bander Lask, on the S.W. side of the town, some made fast to the shore and their own anchors. The water was perfectly smooth for half a mile off shore, and not a ripple on the beach near the boats; I had left a very heavy swell from the S.S.W. outside.

The next village is Hattab, about 12 miles from Ras Sharwein, situated a mile inland. It has some date-groves, and is well supplied with water, contains about 40 houses and 350 inhabitants: six small fishing-boats belong to it; it is a village of little trade and no consequence.

Sihút was one of the towns, if not the principal town, of the Mahrahs to the S.W. of Ras Fartak. It is long and narrow, and, as its length faces the sea, it looks, in that direction, a large town; it contains about 180 houses and a population of 1000. Very many of the houses are dilapidated, some in ruins, and the town is apparently falling fast into decay. It has a considerable trade, however, and possesses 15 buggalows of different sizes, and 50 fishing-boats, which are constantly employed about the coast in the fair season catching sharks, sun-fish, &c.; the latter they dry in the sun, and it is then exported to Zanzibar and other towns.

The Mahrah tribe, as I have already mentioned, extends from Mesinah to Ras Seger; the country of the Beni Gharrah then

commences, but it is said that the Mahrah tribe have territory in the rear of them, and again make their appearance near the sea about Ras Nús. The Mahrah tribe were formerly nearly, if not quite, the most powerful on the S.E. coast of Arabia, and their territory extended from Hussan Ghorab to Ras Isollette; but the neighbouring tribes, amongst whom were the Beni Gharrah, as their strength weakened, gradually deprived them of their territory both E. and W., and even a large slice out in the very centre of it.

The tribe is divided into three great branches, who are constantly at variance with each other, but who would instantly unite against any enemy and drop all their private quarrels. In consequence of the heavy swell constantly rolling in when I was on the coast, I could have but little communication with the shore; the ship's boats could not land at any time, and for days the fishing-boats of the coast could not be launched through the surf. The men who came off in two or three boats showed a great unwillingness to give any information or to take officers on shore; in fact, by constantly demanding more money after a bargain was for that purpose concluded, showed they would not do it.

The family of the present Sultan, Omar, of Keshín, have for many generations been considered as head of the tribe; he is also looked up to with much deference and respect; his influence is great amongst them; but I doubt if, were he to attempt to issue any command distasteful to the tribe, they would obey it; he has no means of enforcing it. The Sultan has been blind for years; he was an energetic old man, but wayward, and it is said his intellect is failing.

On our first visit to survey off Keshín, I sent the interpreter to him immediately on anchoring to explain the reason of my visit, and also to request he would let us purchase some fresh provisions and other articles the vessel required, which I was most anxious to procure, Berri Berri having made its appearance in the ship. He not only refused to let us have what the vessel required, but would not allow the boat's crew even to buy a few dates to eat on shore. The interpreter referred to the way in which the Sheikh of Wadí behaved to the vessel at Ras Fartak; but the Sultan endeavoured to waive the subject, and would give no answer—once saying that they were wild men, but nothing further. And, judging from the way he behaved to the vessel at Keshín, I imagine it was done either with his sanction, or that the Sheikh's conduct did not displease him.

The Mahrahs possess in all about 60 trading-boats, varying in size from 90 or 100 to 10 or 15 tons, the greater number of which are sent away at the commencement of the N.E. mon-

soon, and remain out until the end of it, when they return with their profits to their different ports ; during the above period they keep trading from port to port, hiring the boats to whoever will freight them. They are the greatest slave-dealers on the S.E. coast of Arabia, bringing yearly from 250 to 500 men, women, and children from the African coast ; of these, few are sold in the Mahrah territory, but are taken to Maculla and the towns in the Red Sea. The buggalows and their cargoes are generally the property of several individuals, often residing in different towns.

Winds, &c.—The winds to the south-westward of Fartak towards the end of March generally blow to the S. of E., sometimes S.E., and even S.S.E. and S. ; occasionally, the current also changes and sets to E.N.E. along the shore. The wind generally dies away at night, rendering progress to the W. very difficult. The trading boats from the Persian Gulf and Mascat begin to return in this month from Zanzibar and the Red Sea, and continue to do so until near the end of May. An occasional turn in the current to the westward may take place, and a shift of wind from the N.E., even as late as the 25th of May, but it does not often occur.

To the E.N.E. of Cape Bogashua, after the beginning of May, a high long swell gradually sets in from the southward, rising much higher in the day and falling towards sunset. A long swell rolls on to the coast during the whole of the monsoon ; but the fishermen, when they have a small nook to shelter their boats in launching, go out to fish in it at times.

In the “*Palinurus*” I experienced this swell during the whole month of May, which, when the wind died away, caused her to roll very heavily. It would affect a steamer, of course, in the same way in passing, as generally it would be four or five points on her bow.

From the best information I could procure from many of the natives on the part of the coast I was surveying, fishermen and others, it would appear that the S.W. monsoon, to the south-westward of Morbat, close to the shore, blows fresh only occasionally—a breeze lasting from three to four days ; and is then succeeded by light breezes and calms from three to ten days ; the swell, however, remains. The sea is not so great as that experienced on approaching India. A large steamer passing down from Morbat would be obliged to keep near the shore, where she would experience lighter winds ; and it would of course be necessary to keep a good look-out and the lead constantly going ; though, in some parts, even that would be no guide for the distance off shore. She might, if necessary, pass along at 1 mile distance in the day, and a few miles off it at night ; occasionally

she might probably set her try-sails: but a strong current, from $\frac{1}{2}$ to $1\frac{1}{2}$ mile per hour, would be constantly experienced, running against her to east-north-eastward.

From Morbat to Ras Isolette the coast bends a good deal to the westward, forming two bays, with the Curia Muria Islands projecting from it at a distance of upwards of 30 miles. Along these bays, and nearly as far as Mazeira* Island, the natives that I have spoken to all agree that the monsoon blows stronger and the swell is much higher than on any other part of the coast: this part is much dreaded by them. They also stated that the monsoon sets in there with a gale of wind, dark gloomy weather, thunder, lightning, and rain. Many boats that have been caught in it have been lost: after the first burst, the weather is the same as in the open ocean.

This would be a dangerous part of the coast for a steamer passing in the monsoon; for, the shore running so nearly E. and W. with the islands off it, and the wind and sea from the southward setting directly on them and on the coast, were an accident to happen to her engine on this boisterous part, it would be very doubtful if she could clear herself of the land: it affords no shelter, unless under the largest of the Curia Muria Islands, if she could fetch it. There are soundings, but so deep, except to the eastward of Curia Muria Bay, that a ship would hardly hold on even if she anchored. The reports of the Arabs must always be received, however, with great caution; but I think it doubtful if the passage could ever be relied on with certainty, so as to be advantageous. Under any circumstances, the steamer would have to keep the shore close on board; and the weather being always hazy, the most unceasing and vigilant look-out (particularly at night) would be required, for the slightest deviation from the course might be fatal to the vessel. A ship lately arrived at Bombay from Mascat went up that part of the coast in the month of July, and after passing Maculla her rate of sailing varied from 9 to 11 knots, experiencing strong W.S.W. and S.W. winds. Such a breeze would of course be equal to any experienced on the Indian coast, and would be most unfavourable for a steamer. She passed near and sighted most of the headlands on the coast.

* Massera of the maps.

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TRATE
RS' PAPER.





SOUTH EAST COAST OF ARABIA

TO ILLUSTRATE

CAPT. SAUNDERS' PAPER.



RS' PAPER.



